



British Regional Transport Association

(BRTA)

Main Postal Address: 2 Leigh Road, Hildenborough, Tonbridge, Kent, TN11 9AB

Patrons: Sir Edmund Verney, The Rt Hon. the Lord Newby OBE, Mr George Bathurst, Professor Andrew N Williams BA, BM BCh, MSc, PhD, MRCP, FRCPCH, FRHistS, Mr Trevor Garrod, Mr Colin Crawford, Mr Leonard Lean + others welcome of professional, business, or other acumen and of good repute.

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Always welcome offers to help, assist, volunteer and be an area rep where you live to help recruit new members and support to BRTA and its causes. Please contact Richard Pill, BRTA CEO using contact details above.

<https://ertarail.co.uk/>

<https://linkedin.com/in/richard-pill-brta>

<https://brtarailvolunteer.blogspot.com/>

Newsletter No. 55

May-June 2024

Price £1.50 where sold/Donations welcome

Many Happy Returns! BRTA had a stall at Bedford Midland, the first in many years and engaged with the public giving out flyers, talking and listening to their enquiries. It was cold and hard work but we were grateful for the pitch which cost us nothing and for Andrew Chillingsworth for his help to secure it for us. Thank you, Andrew!

Caption Right: Richard Pill, CEO of BRTA sits central to our table, ready-aye-ready to give out our main Bedford flyer calling for a better public transport deal for Bedford and surrounds.



BRTA Calls on all leaders, to give support to a rebuilt Northampton-Market Harborough Rail Link (N2MH) to reduce chronic congestion, air pollution and make proliferated development more sustainable.

It presently takes 90 plus minutes to commute by train from Leicester to Northampton. However, using Network Rail's own figures from a suppressed and incomplete 2020 report on reopening the Northampton to Market Harborough line (N2MH) this figure would reduce to 34 minutes - including 3 stops.

However, despite a positive parliamentary answer in October 2023, progress towards reopening remains painfully slow. The 2020 Network Rail report is not in the public domain and required several FOI requests to obtain a redacted copy and additional information. However, FOI appeals have been unsuccessful to release the estimates for freight and passengers N2MH would bring, the grounds for rejection being 'commercially sensitive'.

As N2MH was pulled up in 1982, I believe that this amounts to suppression of information.

All successful UK railway reopening schemes have far exceeded their original optimum passenger estimates

N2MH would link the 2 busiest railway lines in the UK and provide a strategically important east-west corridor for freight.

With the opening of the Northampton Gateway Depot this year, (initially opposed by both Northants County councils and all Northants local councils) 7500 additional jobs will be brought.

<https://www.northamptonchron.co.uk/news/massive-logistics-hub-near-northampton-that-will-create-7500-jobs-is-on-track-for-completion-date-3950630>

We in the BRTA believe that reopening N2MH could bring many thousands more jobs to Northamptonshire as well as reducing the excess mortality in Northampton from pollution - regarded as the worst in the country.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c9048q2jxl8o>

We in the BRTA are seeking that the Network Rail 2020 report regarding reopening N2MH is updated, completed, and brought fully into the public realm.

For further comment, please contact Mr Richard Pill, BRTA CEO 01234 330090 richard.erta@gmail.com or Professor Andrew N Williams anw@doctors.org.uk T: 07923489254

Bedford-Northampton would follow more-or-less the old corridor to end of the Stevington Walk area and go north-westerly to tunnel under Lavendon, arc A509 and Yardley Hastings, through or under the Castle Ashby Estate and rejoin old trackbed at Great Houghton into Northampton. That is where studies, land protection measures and tailoring of development to ensure a robust corridor can be done now and in the next 10 years. Why 10 years? It is a benchmark of what normally an idea to deliver local rail reopening should take, not 37 years and counting for East - West Rail since campaigners formally organised and advocated it. In 1994-5 the professionals via a Consortia got involved and became the mainstay leadership. Government can be instrumental here. Bedford-Northampton, new Parkway Stations at A428/A509 roundabout area and Brackmills Industrial Estate, University/Delapre Abbey - all growth areas, satellite development areas and employment centres needing rail choice to access and decluttering peripheral road networks/avoid rat-runs in rural areas too.

One study suggested an end-to-end transit by Thameslink Trains between Bedford and Northampton on a modern railway of approximately 35 minutes, which beats anything by road, but could link with local buses and through ticketing to feed each other more as well.

The Olney area is lost, but the A509/A428 roundabout area could be an alternative. It needs studying. It would enable Cambridge-Bedford-Northampton-Rugby through services and freight by rail, cutting lorries proliferating on these corridors. So, by default, if we want these goodies, Bedford Midland needs reform, redesign and more land-take. There is no getting away from it.

Minimally, the A6 corridor needs stations north of Bedford unless we bury heads in sand and go for triple stacking of car parking and endless congestion into and out of Ashburnham Road, cascading back to Prebend Street and Midland Road respectively?

On Prebend Street going north, I mull over whether making Ford End Road Bridge one-way, westwards direction, and that of Hurst Grove one-way north to Winifred Road with inwards via Bromham Road/Ashburnham Road for south, would free-up the mini-roundabout at Prebend/Ford End/Midland confluence junction? Worth looking into/maybe a consultation and trial? Hope of interest!

Finally, I had an interview last Sunday on Talk TV and here are the details for any who wish to listen: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tu300aPFMdE>

It's at around 1:30:00 timestamp-wise.

I would like more interviews and media support for BRTA, any willing to act as a gentle voluntary agent for me, please do get in touch. Thank you.

West Country Mullings: The BRTA has noted that the Government had £27 billion which was allocated to new roads, whereas only £500 million to fund railways and active travel. Given a Climate Emergency and a dire need for choice and modal shift back to rail-based operational platforms for passenger and freight; parity or favouring towards rail should be a logical consequence.

We should wish for better, more integrated rail services which are "vital" to the south-west peninsula, which has been constant in its message to the Government that the resilience of our rail network is crucial. Other improvements were also being explored which could provide Somerset with better rail services - including links to neighbouring settlements such as Devon and Dorset.

Chard Parkway (Waterloo - Exeter Line), Wellington, Somerton and Langport (Paddington - West of England Line), and The Gravity site near Bridgwater (on Bristol-Exeter Line) should expect to have railway stations in a few years. Many of the county's stations were closed due to the Beeching cuts of the mid-1960s.

- Wellington: The restoration project is expected to cost £15m and will be delivered by Network Rail, which is now leading the project.
- Chard Parkway: Councillor Connor Payne secured £23,000 from local residents and businesses to fund an outline business case, which was submitted to the Department for Transport (DfT) in the autumn.
- Somerton and Langport: The strategic outline business case remains under consideration by the DfT.
- The Gravity Site near Bridgwater: Efforts to deliver a new rail link to the site (which is a development for an employment hub and was originally priced at £50m) remain at a standstill until the potential occupier has signed on the dotted line.

The improvements put forward which would directly benefit Somerset included:

- A full review of timetables to ensure rail services are better integrated with local bus services
- Extending both Bristol - Taunton and Cardiff - Taunton services as far as Exeter St. David's every two hours
- Allowing nine daily Cross-Country services between Exeter and Manchester Piccadilly to call at Bridgwater
- Expanding services between Bristol Temple Meads and Weymouth to one train per hour (via Frome, Bruton, Castle Cary and Yeovil Pen Mill).

By Simon Barber Contact: T: 0208 940 4399 E: simon4barber@gmail.com

Eds Note: There are others and Corsham remains in need of champions to make common cause and get about it. Organised campaigning pays dividends, not merely yar-boosing!

BRTA Summary and clarification of some points and add others following the BRTA Northampton to Market Harborough (N2MH) Rail Link Public Meeting on Saturday 16th March 2024

“Unless N2MH within the next 6 months start to get lift off from the local and county councils to assist with funding an updated report to be included within the future transport plan, then chances of future success will remain very small. “

Professor Andrew N. Williams, BRTA Patron and N2MH Lead Officer.

Captions Right: People gather at Market Harborough for the BRTA Public Meeting. Clearly, we need tiers of council and public support for this pioneering campaign to actually be getting somewhere. We need people to join BRTA and offer to serve as volunteers, assisting with aspects and helping us do more and better. That is where improvement stops and starts and we call on all members to encourage others to join as a starting point for facilitating more and better. The way BRTA works, is we do what we do as we can, but rely on a growing membership and ‘association’ of principle to multiply the campaigns and ‘acts’ to get things improved x whatever the specific local application can be x nationwide. You can make a difference!



- Network Rail - their 2020 report redacted on commercial grounds their calculated freight and passenger capacity figures. These were not obtainable even under a final FOI appeal. Such figures have usually found to be gross underestimates when the lines are fully reopened.
- The Borders line opened 2015, its 2019 annual figures were 1.3 million passengers. This was on 2 tph, mostly single-track railway going from out of the borders to a main station. The recently reopened mostly dual tracked Ebbw Vale to Newport line (2024) will have 4 trains per hour (56 per day). N2MH would on NR estimates be fully dual tracked and linking the two busiest rail lines in the country. 4tph seems a reasonable estimate
- The 2020 NR report does not show the population growth, since several housing developments are taking place along that corridor.
- EEH - I heard Naomi Green speak at the STB Meeting at the NEC Birmingham last July and said hello to her there
- The last EEH meeting was held in December 2023 but Professor Andrew Williams was not able to attend due to personal reasons and the county councillor who was supposed to be turning up apparently his car broke down on the way. Despite the ministerial written answer of October 2023 for us to work with EEH for N2MH, N2MH was not on the EEH December meeting's agenda. Further direct enquiries, with EEH related that 'N2MH did not meet the necessary threshold'
- Zoom meeting held Feb 2024 with Ms Green to determine what these thresholds are. This has been separately minuted and sent to Richard. Basically, a very different conversation would be being had if this was a PFI initiative, and therefore to move forward with N2MH the elected local and county councils must be fully on board and supportive
- Professor Williams and not EEH mentioned the green dividend that now comes from building any infrastructure project in the UK as related at the STB meeting at the NEC in July. We do not know what this means for N2MH. Professor Williams specifically wanted the updated study to quantify what this could precisely mean, so that residents of North Northants and South Leicestershire could themselves choose from a range of options. Professor Williams suggested, sensory gardens, some re forestation, and parks with equal access for all children with disabilities as potential options. The study will surely provide other options too
- West Northants Council - there has been no discussion from both West and North Northants Councils on the rail link. FOI request and answer (continues) from March 2023 stating no discussion at all since two county councils were established was mentioned
- Northampton's local community launched a campaign (1000 voices) calling for West Northants Council to clean up Northampton's toxic air pending an imminent writ being served on them by DEFRA for this inactivity. This 1000 voice campaign uses figures

from the British Heart Foundation stating annually the 1000 excess deaths countywide and 102 for Northampton. This campaign has received wide national TV publicity BBC and ITV and further demonstrations are planned for next week.

- A Northampton Local Councillor recently told Professor Williams that he did offer to purchase some monitors to assess pollution in his ward, but was told the council had no means to collect any data obtained. No such monitors have been purchased.
- Ove Arup Associates - at the STB meeting at the NEC in July last year they quoted to me a figure that such a survey costs £80,000. They have not undertaken any such survey concerning N2MH
- Northampton South Labour PPC - the prospective Labour candidate for our forthcoming election is in favour of re-opening the Northampton-Market Harborough railway. Mr Peter Doveston has an email from him which needs to be precisely quoted and included here
- Questions were raised about the capacity of Leicester for N2MH. The truth is we do not know what this is and NR have withheld their own figures.
- Concerning these alleged Leicester issues, Professor Williams should have raised the option of changing at MH and then waiting up to 15 minutes to connect to the Leicester service. This would still mean a reduction in Northampton to Leicester by rail from 90 plus minutes to around 50 minutes, still a significant saving
- Market Harborough Station - we are calling for the station's enhanced capacity to be considered as part of the updated report.
- Mr Peter Doveston mentioned a currently being created Northampton Transport plan for which N2MH needs to be included.

**AGM and Public Meeting: Saturday, 13 July at The Court House,
Church Lane, Berkhamsted HP4 2AX for**

2-3pm AGM and 3pm onwards business. Phone: 01442-878227

<https://www.stpetersberkhamsted.org.uk/courthouse/>

12 Noon Wetherspoons lunch (BRTA)/13.00 Set Up. **Guest Speaker: Karl Watts, a director at Railmotive Ltd.** All welcome/admission free. Please bring cash with you to peruse our second-hand book and rail magazine stall, donate or join. **Note:** If you join as a new member on an old form, it will be honoured for the first year!

Association and other news:

<p>BRTA Green Transport Fair: We want to host a Green Transport Fair in Bedford in 2025 to bring outlets together under one roof and if profitable, to make it an annual event to undergird our campaign agendas and that of like-minds as well. If anyone or set of people would like to help Richard with organising such an event, possibly May or late September/October next year, please email richard.erta@gmail.com and let's meet. It maybe- given our nationwide status and focus, that elsewhere like Leicester or Guildford could be winners too. If interested, please let Richard Pill know.</p> <p>Key areas are dates, researching grants, getting sponsors and marketing. Happy to team up and explore options.</p>	<p>Voluntary Opportunities with BRTA – could this be a place for you? Richard Pill, CEO of BRTA has taken over from Simon Barber as the BRTA Volunteer Liaison Officer.</p> <p>Our volunteering opportunities are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Open to members of any age to help with either or combinations of remote host/desktop sort of operations, hands-on public and administration like serving on the Executive Committee, niche filling and general help by negotiation.2. Non-members do not have voting rights and may not attend some internal meetings. But tasks like fund-raising, helping troubleshoot with technology and the progressive digitalisation and age range reach of support we may wish to court.3. Qualities we value are reliability, trustworthiness, basic honesty, and commitment.
<p>Good News: Tracks have linked up between Oxford, Bicester and Bletchley for the first time since about 1989, a very long time, too long! This will enable freight and passenger trains between Oxford and Bedford and Milton Keynes. Our calls amongst others for an Aylesbury-Claydon rail link and a new Parkway Station for Claydon, in a growth area, have had mixed responses, but ultimately 2050 seems a date for Government bite-sizes crossing l's and dotting t's with infrastructure projects, too late for some of us, but of benefit to future generations. As long as we have human existence and civilisation, local rail solutions are needed.</p>	<p>BRTA Focuses: Given our limited people, time and resources generally, we concentrate on core areas namely Leicester (East Midlands Gateway) to Brighton (South Coast), Kent to Rugby and growing into parts of the West Country, Northern England and elsewhere, governed by who joins, what they are willing to do and the credibility of the merits lending itself to whatever action, campaign or contribution as willing, wanted and needed being matched. Northampton to Market Harborough (N2MH), Guildford-Horsham-Shoreham and Bedfordshire is enough for what we have, with interspersions on specific issues like support for the West Wales Main Line to be rebuilt and Dumfries-Stranraer (Scotland) as and when we can get the marketing diagrams. Competent volunteers welcome.</p>

Dates for Diary:

BRTA Ampthill-Flitwick Forum: 1pm food, 2pm business at The Swan Pub (lounge), 1 Dunstable Road, Flitwick, Beds. Opposite Thameslink-served Railway Station – MK45 1HP. <https://www.swaninnflitwick.co.uk/> Local BRTA Contact: Mr Richard Pill, BRTA Bedfordshire Area Rep. **Wednesday 1st May 2024.** All Welcome.

The project needs wider public and elected political support and a Coordinator of the project, would be just the ticket. We are here for the long haul!

BRTA Bedford Midland Railway Station Stall on Saturday 25th May 10am-4pm at Ashburnham Road, Bedford, MK40 1DS. All welcome. Why not also have a ride on the Bedford-Bletchley local railway, soon to be part of an Oxford-Bedford East-West Railway!

Directions:

<https://www.google.com/search?q=Bedford+Midland+Railway+Station+Postal+Address>

Enjoy what Bedford has to offer as well. The river, museums, history and coffee shops!

Bedford Midland is also served by Thameslink and East Midlands Trains as well.

Please bring cash to join, peruse our second-hand books and railway related magazines and to donate if you wish. Any enquiries or offers via Richard Pill, Beds Area Rep BRTA – see header at the front for contact details. Thanks to Andrew Chillingsworth, Thameslink!

BRTA Summer Forums: Where Executive Officers go to the regions, we are not so active in and reach out to find new members and support for our local rail agendas. Join us and let us get networking together! This summer, we are calling at:

1. **Westbury - Saturday, 18 May** at the Railway Inn, Station Road, Westbury BA13 4HW <https://www.railwayinn-westbury.co.uk/> Phone: Karen Griggs (landlady) 01373-228109 (landline) 07402-322334 (mobile)

2. **Shrewsbury - Saturday, 8 June** at the Montgomery Tower, Lower Claremont Bank, Shrewsbury, Salop. SY1 1RT <https://www.jdwetherspoon.com/pubs/all-pubs/england/shropshire/montgomerys-tower-shrewsbury> Phone: 01743-239080.

3. **Sheffield - Saturday, 29 June** at the Benjamin Huntsman, 12-18 Cambridge Street, Sheffield, South Yorks. S1 4UD <https://www.jdwetherspoon.com/pubs/all-pubs/england/south-yorkshire/the-benjamin-huntsman-sheffield> Phone: 0114-263-9500.

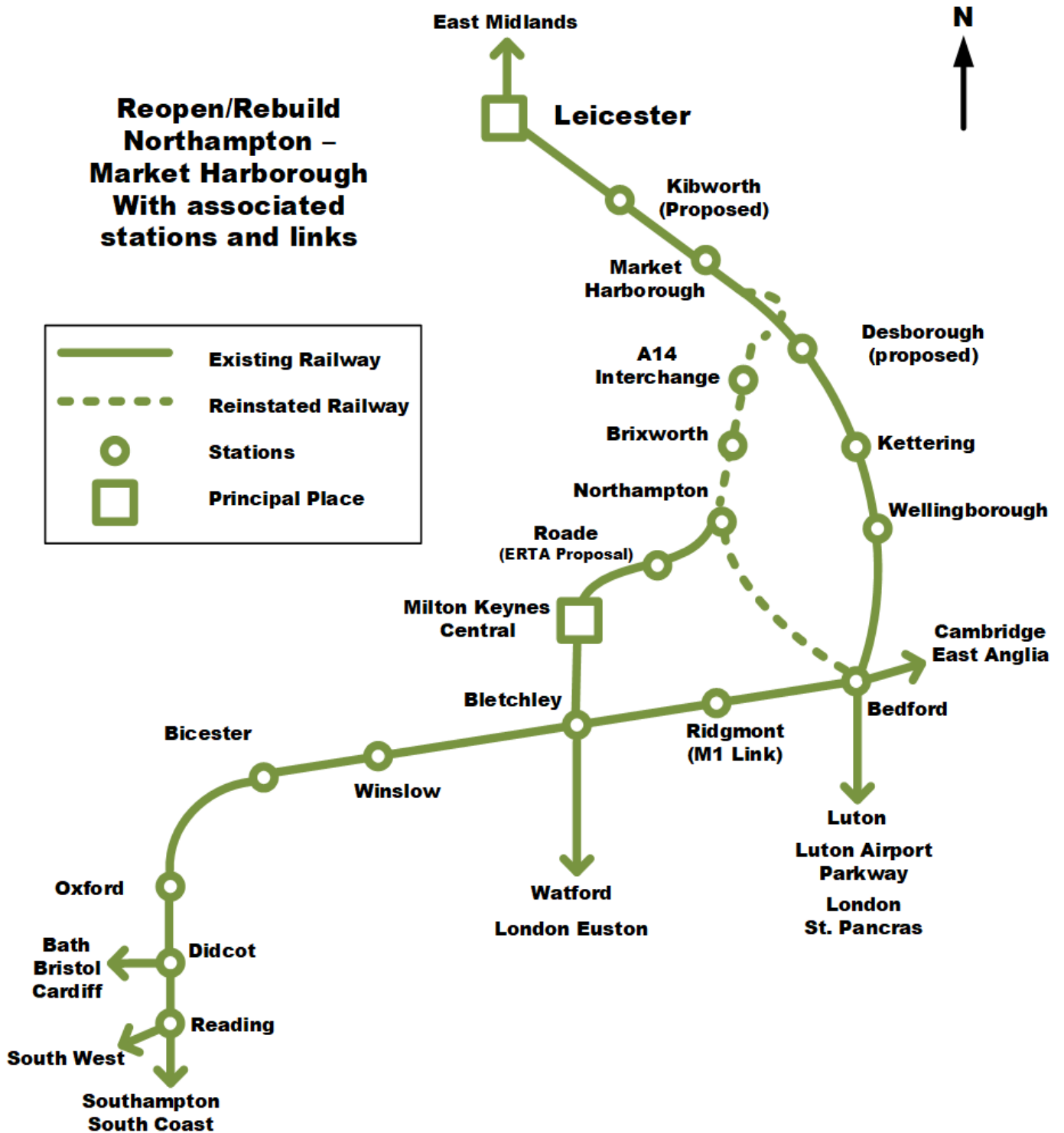
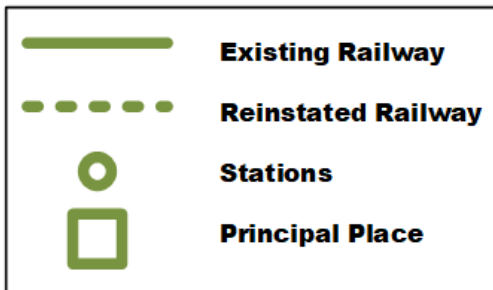
Chief Executive Officers for these Summer Forums are Messrs Simon Barber and David Ferguson (see header): **c/o T: 0208 940 4399**

All meetings are 1pm food and 2pm onwards business. Check for details.

E: simon4barber@gmail.com People are responsible for their own food and drink and transport arrangements. Why not take hotel or B&B and enjoy exploring a new area? If you want 'more and better,' be willing to enable that!

Northampton – Market Harborough

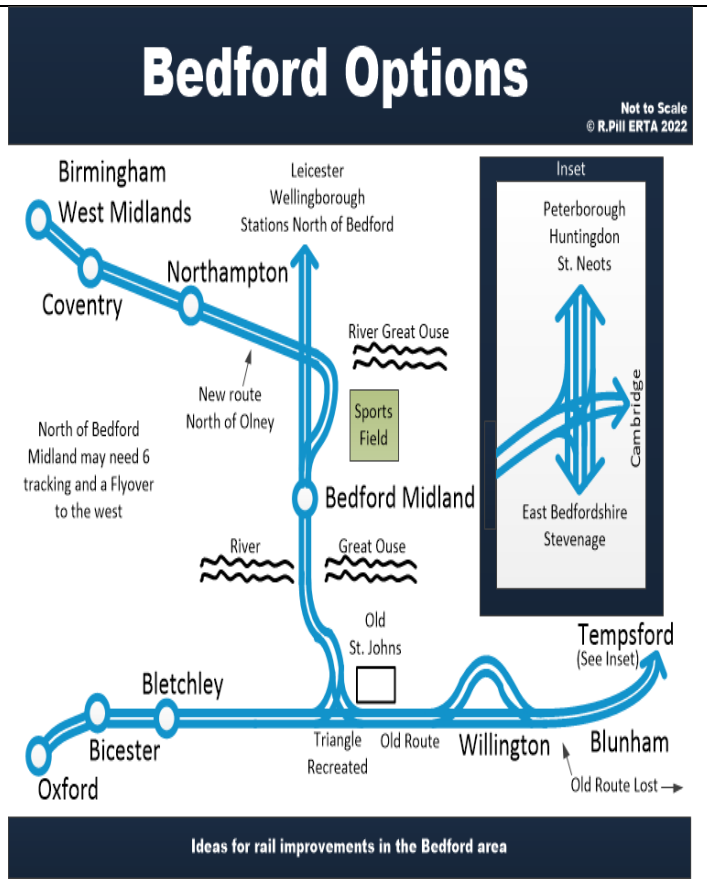
**Reopen/Rebuild
Northampton –
Market Harborough
With associated
stations and links**



From the CEO

Where things are at: Two steps forward, one back is still one step forward and as many may know, ‘a thousand miles, begins with a single step.’ Transitioning has been painful, it is ongoing. Protractedness on dealing with HSBC Bank changes, changing email accounts/addresses and that of the URL and other updating, all takes time. We are volunteers with interweaving lives and our availability varies from time to time. Things can interrupt our lives from births, marriages and deaths to unexpected twists and turns, relationships, cares, concerns and health can all take a toll, de-rail focuses and basically, over the years maintaining a core of dedicated people with the versatility such a task and mission as ours requires, requires constant vigilance to keep the show going. BRTA, inherits from ERTA, the long-standing issues of enough needs of human and adequate financial resources. On the cheery side, we are lucky to have all the people who do associate with us, our loyal core of members and activists who give tirelessly to what they and I believe is required for the betterment of our nation, namely more and better public transport ordinary people can easily access, afford and enough of it. Reopening local rail links is key to modal shift, lowering emissions, improving public health and well-being and ensuring the land-use of balancing urbanisation with enough for growing food and conservation is done appropriately. Most will know we are far from these goals being comprehensively realised and crucially, acted upon. It must not be down to us, but our elected and other leaders, powers, deploying wealth and investment and enabling steps in the right direction!

Association News: Originally BRTA’s origins came from Bedford and myself (Richard Pill). Therefore, we have expanded out from this part of the nation. Recently, our Bedford Forum had a visit from the Elected Mayor Cllr Tom Wootton of Bedford Borough Unitary Council to discuss East-West Rail and associated issues like routing, pros and cons – no route is a panacea – but BRTA remains resolute ‘east of Bedford via St John’s and physical track connections with the ECML in the Tempsford area, north or south of Station Road’. Development should not come first and block this option. Another prospect is a Universal American Theme Park courting up to 18 million visitors a year, bigger than Disney! It will be served by emergent Wixams and Kempston Hardwick respectively. York-Oxford, Stevenage – Birmingham becomes apparent with our suggested options.



BRTA Membership Form 2024 Onwards – Join or Renew
Official annual renewal date is circa 31st January in any given year.



Tear Off and Send with Your Subscription.

Please help us recruit more members!

Tick if a New Member: _____

Tick if renewing as an existing member: _____

I/we would like more information about volunteering opportunities with

BRTA _____

Membership of BRTA is as follows:

Ordinary Member/Family £20 _____

Corporate Members (Business/Organisations) £100 _____

Concessionary Membership (Students or on any kind of welfare/disability)

£10 _____

Name (Please Print): _____

Address: _____

Postcode: _____

Tel/Mobile: _____ Email _____

**I/We hereby give consent to our data being used and stored for the purposes of
communication with BRTA and its purposes compliant with General Data Protection**

Regulation (GDPR) _____

Signed: _____ Dated: _____

Please send completed form and payment to BRTA Membership:

**BRTA, Mr David J. Start, 2 Leigh Road, Hildenborough,
Tonbridge, Kent, TN11 9AB**

Membership Payment can also be done on-line via our website:

<https://ERTArail.co.uk/become-a-member/>

Bank Details are Sort Code: 40-45-27 Account Number: 92086808

~ Please note use 'ERTA' for payment until we can get the bank to change the name. ~